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SUBJECT: CONGRESSMAN WEXLER'S MEETING WITH SARKOZY'S  
DIPLOMATIC ADVISER LEVITTE

Classified By: Ambassador Craig R. Stapleton. Reasons 1.4b,d

¶1. (C) Summary: Congressman Wexler and Presidential Diplomatic Adviser Jean-David Levitte discussed Hizballah and Lebanon, Darfur, Kosovo, Turkey and Iran during a July 2 meeting. Levitte emphasized that Sarkozy continued to hold to the view he espoused during the presidential campaign that Hizballah was a terrorist group. Levitte warned that Syria might be on the verge of instructing Lebanese President Lahoud to form a second government comprised primarily of Hizballah and followers of Christian leader General Aoun -- "a recipe for civil war" that had to be averted. Concerning Darfur, Levitte stated that both Sarkozy and FM Kouchner believed the Chirac administration had not done enough. Alongside French humanitarian efforts in Chad, France wanted to play its part by mobilizing international support for a unified UN-AU peace process and UNSC authorization and deployment of a UN-AU Hybrid force. Levitte emphasized the need for European unity on Kosovo, noting that some Europeans (though not France) had a legal problem with maintaining troops absent UNSC authorization. Levitte reiterated that Sarkozy did not support Turkish integration into the EU and favored a privileged partnership. Sarkozy had agreed to allow accession talks to move forward in order to soften the blow; however, he wanted to see an EU working group meet to fix EU borders. Levitte expressed serious concern at the prospect of Congressional sanctions targeting European and other companies who invest in Iran, warning at the risk of a U.S.-EU "war" that would divert effort from the real objective of transforming Iran. Levitte claimed U.S.-French strategy on Iran was bearing fruit. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Congressman Wexler, accompanied by Ambassador and DCM, met on July 2 with Presidential Diplomatic Adviser (NSA-Equivalent) Jean-David Levitte. Asked whether French and European views of Hizballah would change if reports proved true about a high-level Hizballah figure implicated in plotting against the U.S. military in Iraq, Levitte responded that Sarkozy already had a very defined view: Hizballah were terrorists. This was Sarkozy's view as a candidate and it remained his view as President, Levitte said. Sarkozy had made this known to Lebanese PM Siniora during the latter's June 26 visit; Sarkozy had been equally clear during the G-8 dinner at Heiligendamm. Sarkozy was a champion of pluralism -- he had helped to authorize construction of mosques in France as Minister of Interior. Yet Sarkozy saw no evidence of reciprocity among Islamists. There were only two pluralist nations in the Middle East, Levitte commented in an implicit reference to Israel and Lebanon, and these states were under continuous assault.

¶3. (C) Levitte warned that Syria might be on the verge of instructing Lebanese President Lahoud to form a second

government comprised primarily of Hizballah and Aounists -- "a recipe for civil war." It was imperative to jump-start dialogue in order to preempt such a tragic development, Levitte stated. The Arab League was trying to organize dialogue in Beirut; while initially positive, Hizballah and Speaker Nabih Berri then rejected the initiative out of hand on orders from Damascus, he said. At best, the Arab League effort would now go forward at the working level, absent leaders or grass-roots figures, and without any media or conclusions.

14. (C) Turning to Darfur, Levitte admitted that France was a "latecomer" to the cause. Both Sarkozy and FM Kouchner believed the Chirac administration had not done enough. France now wanted to play its part, which for now meant seizing the initiative to mobilize support within the international community for a unified UN-AU peace process and to boost UNSC authorization and the subsequent deployment of a UN-AU Hybrid force. France was also trying to spearhead additional humanitarian assistance in eastern Chad, both for refugees from Darfur and Chadians displaced by the conflict. "Darfur is no longer the worst situation," Levitte observed, given the huge humanitarian operation already underway.

15. (C) Wexler pressed Levitte on European unease on Kosovar independence. Levitte demurred that many Europeans -- though not the French -- had genuine legal difficulties, because they relied on UNSCR 1244 for the legitimacy of their troop deployments in Kosovo. At the G-8 Sarkozy had proposed a four-to-six month hiatus on UNSC negotiations on the condition that Kosovar independence would then follow. Russia had pocketed the delay, Levitte admitted, without making concessions. Levitte stated that the best French diplomats were now looking for a semantic solution to the conundrum over SCR 1244 -- trying to find a way to renew the UNMIK mandate in such a way that it would automatically

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expire and translate into Kosovar independence. Levitte hoped that the Kennebunkport meetings between President Bush and President Putin would produce a more favorable atmosphere. European unity was crucial, he stressed, to moving forward.

16. (C) Asked his view of former UK PM Tony Blair's appointment as the Quartet Middle East Envoy, Levitte suggested that Blair's role remained unclear but that he should have a larger profile than his predecessor, James Wolfensohn. "Sarkozy loves Blair," Levitte added warmly, alluding to widespread press reports about how the French President would like to see Blair as the first EU president. That would be an excellent role for Blair and especially for transatlantic relations, Levitte opined.

17. (C) As the meeting drew to a close, Levitte asked to address two specific issues with Congressman Wexler: Turkey and Iran. Levitte underlined the views of Sarkozy, both as candidate and as President, that Turkey did not warrant EU membership. Adding a population 100 million Muslims, who were "a mix of Kemalists and Islamists", would damage the EU and ultimately harm EU-U.S. relations, he suggested. To soften the blow and avoid offense to Turkey and undue complications to the election campaign of PM Erdogan, France had agreed to continue EU negotiations with Turkey on accession with a view to either full membership or, the preferred French outcome, a reinforced partnership. The EU, Levitte said, had no clear notion of its borders, unlike the U.S., and Sarkozy wanted the EU to establish a working group to resolve the issue. Levitte observed that if Turkey were an EU member, then Iran and Syria would share frontiers with the EU.

18. (C) Levitte expressed serious concern at the prospect of Congressional sanctions targeting European and other companies that invest in Iran. Congressman Wexler noted that he had played a role in the passage of Florida legislation on

divestment and he defended the role of individual states to invest as they they wish. He asked Levitte to explain why divestment had been an appropriate strategy for effecting change in South Africa but would not be correct for Iran. Levitte argued there was a qualitative difference between divesting from South Africa as opposed to divesting from foreign companies that did business there. Levitte warned that a U.S. movement to divest from companies doing business in Iran would spark a U.S.-EU "war" and divert from the real objective of transforming Iran. U.S.-French strategy on Iran was bearing fruit, Levitte claimed, pointing to street protests and economic difficulties. Levitte thought it dangerous to politicize economic decision-making; he cautioned that others could later follow the U.S. lead but in different directions. The U.S. and global economy, for instance, would suffer grievously if the PRC, with its enormous foreign reserves, were to embark on investment or divestment strategies on the basis of political criteria. "If you start this, then be prepared for others to do the same," Levitte warned.

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